



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, TASK FORCE 1-501ST PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT
FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09354

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

APVR-RLBB-CO
March 2004

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: FY 2003 TF 1-501ST PIR Historical Summary

1. FY 2003 ended in the preparation of the first combat deployment by 1-501ST Parachute Infantry Regiment since Vietnam. On October 27, 2003, 839 paratroopers deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The previous months of FY03 were equally full of other important deployments, the transformation from a battalion to a task force and the subsequent redesignations of assigned units, and monumental unit and individual achievements.

2. Deployment Summary.

a. The year began with the first of two deployments for Apache and Comanche Companies to the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, CA. NTC Rotation 03-03 began on 7 November and lasted until 5 December, where they fought alongside the 2-11th ACR Eaglehorse as OPFOR augmentees against 1st BDE, 3rd ID as they prepared for the inevitable fight in Iraq. After completing 2 weeks of platoon combined arms trench live fire exercises, the Apaches and Comanches worked as TF Angel and TF Destroyer in five force-on-force engagements. The training experience ended on 5 December with an in-flight rig aboard three C-17s and the homecoming jump into Malamute DZ. Meanwhile, Blackfoot Company and elements of Hatchet Company deployed to Fort Wainwright to fight as the Opposing Force (OPFOR) against 2-1 IN and 1-17 IN during the 172nd Brigade (Separate) EXEVALS (Arctic Heat). They jumped into Donnelly DZ on 18 November and jumped back into Malamute DZ on 26 November, both jumps in temperatures well below zero.

b. The second deployment to NTC began on 16 February. Originally, the rotation called for 1-501ST PIR to fight as the light force supporting 1st BDE, 4th ID. However, due to the deployment of 4th ID to Iraq, NTC Rotation 03-05 became our own with an unorthodox

battalion-sized rotation. In this highly successful deployment, no mission was left unaccomplished; without even a re-do. Elements of 2-11 ACR split and fought against themselves, becoming our supporting heavy force. The missions that were accomplished included seizing two different cave complexes, a defense of the Iron Triangle, and two movements to contact. The Observer/Controllers were constantly commenting on how the OPFOR was being overwhelmed and defeated; quickly the Geronimos became the talk of Fort Irwin. Those lessons learned and the confidence that was built have since been applied at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan. The unit returned home on 12 March to snowy Fort Richardson; just in time to enjoy some beautiful spring skiing.

c. After two weeks of recovery, 1st Platoon, B Company, all the O-3s, and the majority of E-6's got to spend the month of April in Fort Polk, LA providing O/C support to the 172nd Brigade's rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Center. In mid-May the Geronimo's won the Brigade Games at Fort Wainwright, and then took a two week, well deserved, block leave period. Returning from leave, the Geronimos continued a unit tradition by honoring the warriors of past wars with their annual D-Day Ceremony at the Fort Richardson cemetery. Mr. Alden Todd served as the guest speaker and encouraged the Geronimos to remain ready and focused on whatever mission might lie ahead. That immediate mission was another deployment. The battalion left Alaska during the days of the midnight sun to support the Initial Operational Testing and Evaluations (IOT&E) of the STRYKER Brigade Combat Team at Fort Knox, KY. The newly redesignated Task Force deployed and operated at Fort Knox from 16 June through 27 August. Much of the time was spent fighting 1st BDE, 25th ID's STRYKER vehicles; however, there was also time to train as a unit on the state of the art MOUT facilities at Fort Knox. The fish of Alaska were safer for the summer with the unit's absence.

d. While at Fort Knox, TF 1-501st PIR was alerted for deployment to Afghanistan. The redeployment from Fort Knox was pushed up in order to begin preparations for Operation Enduring Freedom IV. While there, the Task Force would fall under the operational command of the 10th Mountain Division. After almost two months of hard work and preparation, TF 1-501st PIR left for Afghanistan.

Before deploying, Soldiers from TF 1-501st PIR and attachments were rapidly fielded many items of equipment to include: shotguns for rifle squad leaders, M14s (one per fire team), cold weather gear, metal detectors, fiber optic cameras, ACOG rifle sights, back up sights for M4s, ITAS optics, and many other gadgets and gizmos. Thanks to the deployments to Fort Knox and NTC, the unit was already well trained and prepared for another deployment. Pre-deployment training at Fort Richardson focused on MOUT, assault of bunker complexes, ROE STX lanes, and the final airborne operations before deployment.

3. Transformation and Redesignation Summary.

a. The transformation from the original battalion to an airborne Task Force has not taken place in one drastic change. The transformation is ongoing, but two phases of change have already taken place. These changes, scheduled in conjunction of other key events, began during the D-Day Remembrance Ceremony on 5 June. The former 3rd Platoon, 562nd Engineer Company, the former C Battery, 4-11 Field Artillery Regiment, and the former D Company, 172nd Support Battalion were permanently assigned to 1-501st PIR. The Engineer Platoon is now part of HHC Company, C Battery, 4-11th FA was initially redesignated E Battery, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment. However, E Battery did not last and was subsequently changed again to B Battery, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment during a ceremony in Afghanistan on 21 December. B/377 has a long, symbiotic history with the 1-

501st PIR, supporting each other in both World War II and Vietnam.

b. The second phase of the transformation was celebrated, along with the departure ceremony, on 23 October at Buckner Physical Fitness Center. This event marked the redesignation of 1-501st Parachute Infantry Regiment to Task Force 1-501st Parachute Infantry Regiment and ended our affiliation with 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate). The Task Force currently operates directly under USARAK. With the anticipated MTOE change, a new heavy weapons detachment was formed. D Detachment "Delawares" was created under the command of CPT Brent Morrow and MSG Mark Imler. The only Air Defense Artillery platoon in Alaska was moved from Fort Wainwright to join the mighty Delawares. The former D Company, 172nd Support Battalion was renamed the Forward Support Company (FSC), TF 1-501st PIR. Also during the departure ceremony, the unit and American colors were cased for deployment. These colors were to be uncased in a ceremony held in Afghanistan once the Geronimo's had completed the transfer of authority at FOB Salerno.

4. Individual and Unit Achievements.

a. Any great organization is comprised of equally amazing individuals. TF 1-501st PIR is no exception. Examples are: SSG Schaffer and SGT Hensley who won the International Sniper Competition at Fort Benning, GA; CPT Marsh who summited Mt. McKinley; and SPC Carmen who won the USARAK Soldier of the Year honor.

b. In April, while still under 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate), 1-501st PIR jumped into FWA to participate in the annual Brigade Spring Games. In the final Brigade Games including 1-501st, 2-1 IN and 1-17 IN were defeated and the title returned to Fort Richardson.

5. Promotions and Changes of Command.

a. B Company changed command from CPT Jeff Crapo to CPT David Hale on 11 December 2002. 1SG Terry Matuskowitz retired in January and was replaced with 1SG Michael Harrigan. In July, 1SG Harrigan moved to Fort Campbell, KY, and SFC Dave Powell, the former 3rd PLT, C CO PSG, became the new Blackfoot Company 1SG.

b. HHC changed command from CPT Michael Hall to CPT Steven Natole on 15 May 2003. 1SG Figarelle PCS'd on 16 May and was replaced by 1SG Mark Collazos on 1 August. In the interim, SFC Walker, AT platoon, served as 1SG.

c. 1SG Michael Bryers, C Company, moved to the USARAK G-3 section and was replaced by 1SG Kerry Guthrie on 1 September.

d. The Battalion XO, MAJ Jim DeMoss took the Secretary for the General Staff job in June and was replaced by MAJ Kyle Lear, the former Battalion S-3. The S-3 position was filled by MAJ Val Keaveny on 20 August. Tragically, the former Battalion S-3 and XO, MAJ Vince "Coach" Lombardi, passed away on 18 February, while the unit was deployed to NTC. His life influenced everyone who had met him.

6. Since Task Force 1-501st PIR's activation in Alaska, 2003 has been a year without equal. Key events of previous year's histories fail to be mentioned when compared to the events of 2003. Events like live fire exercises, airborne assaults, and the daily hard work of all paratroopers continued to happen, despite not showing up in this year's history. As is the

Geronimo tradition, all Soldiers displayed personal excellence and completed the mission at hand.

GERONIMO!

xxx///Original Signed///xxx

HARRY C. GLENN, III

LTC, IN

Commanding